



PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Nearly \$2 Million in New Investments in Holyoke's Transformative Development Initiative District

Infrastructure improvements and urban farming initiative will enhance city's walkability and bring new workforce training capacity

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Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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HOLYOKE, MA — Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced two exciting investments in the City of Holyoke's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) District. The administration, in partnership with MassDevelopment, will invest more than \$200,000 in an innovative urban farming and workforce training program. Through the state's MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program, the administration will also award \$1.6 million to improve walkability and pedestrian safety in the district, leveraging nearly \$3 million in local and federal funding.

"These investments will help spur growth and create economic opportunities for Holyoke citizens and businesses," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "Our administration looks forward to partnering with the Mayor and City officials on these innovative solutions to improve their community."

"This funding supports strategic efforts to strengthen housing development, infrastructure enhancements, and economic growth in Holyoke and the region," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "The transformation of downtown Holyoke will benefit residents for years to come."

[MassDevelopment](#), the [City of Holyoke](#), [Holyoke Community College](#) (HCC), the [Holyoke Redevelopment Authority](#), and grassroots urban agriculture organization [Nuestras Raíces](#) are partnering on the project. Nuestras Raíces will manage two container farms, next to the new [HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute](#), for a new workforce training program that educates HCC interns and apprentices from the surrounding neighborhoods on the basics of hydroponic food production. Participants will grow leafy greens like lettuce, spinach, basil and cilantro in the two containers, and sell some of this produce to the neighboring Culinary Arts Institute, HCC's on-campus dining services, and local restaurants.

The \$1.6 million MassWorks Infrastructure award will support significant improvements to pedestrian safety and enhance walkability within the city's TDI District, and will be matched by \$1.1 million in local funds, and \$1.8 million from the State/Federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Today's announcement builds on more than \$5 million awarded to the city through the MassWorks program.

"We are committed to working with our municipal and legislative partners to pursue innovative workforce development programming, and MassDevelopment's investment in urban farming is an exciting opportunity for students and residents in Holyoke," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash**. "Holyoke has made important investments in the city's future, creating vibrant, walkable communities, and new housing to attract and retain a talented workforce, families, and new businesses."

The MassWorks Infrastructure Program provides a one-stop shop for municipalities and other eligible public entities seeking public infrastructure funding to support housing production, economic development, and job creation. Since 2015, and including this year's awards, the Baker-Polito Administration has awarded more than \$274 million to 134 projects in 106 communities throughout the

Commonwealth, spurring the development of over 2 million square feet of commercial and retail space, over 7,000 immediate housing units, at least 7,000 square feet of new public space, 1,200 new hotel rooms, and commercial/retail space.

"I'm very grateful to Governor Baker and Secretary Ash for this MassWorks grant, which will supplement the considerable investment going into the complete reconstruction of Front and Heritage streets, and unlock the economic potential of new commercial and housing developments along their paths right here in Center City Holyoke," **said Mayor Alex Morse.**

"It is always great to have Secretary Ash visit Holyoke," **said Representative Aaron Vega.** "He understands the needs and the opportunity of our city and has continually supported our revitalization efforts. I am excited about the TDI investment and the MassWorks grants that will add to the investment and revitalization of our downtown."

The containers are provided by [Freight Farms](#), a company that modifies shipping containers for the purpose of creating year-round agriculture in any environment. A portion of the produce will also go toward tackling food insecurity at the HCC campus and in the broader Holyoke community.

The funds for the two container farms come from MassDevelopment's [Transformative Development Initiative](#), a program for Gateway Cities designed to accelerate economic growth within focused districts. The program works with cross-sector partnerships to engage community members in actionable planning, implement local economic development initiatives, and spur further public and private investment. In 2014, MassDevelopment designated the [Holyoke TOD District](#) – part of Holyoke's larger [Innovation District](#) – as a TDI District to receive enhanced assistance that supports local visions for redevelopment. The container farms project grew out of TDI technical assistance and market strategy efforts, which refined a Holyoke Innovation District goal of expanding urban agriculture in the City to encompass controlled environment agriculture, such as hydroponic farming.

"These container farms go beyond providing a space to grow produce, as they hold opportunity for workforce training, economic development, and sustainability," **said MassDevelopment President and CEO Lauren Liss.** "Students, residents, and visitors in Holyoke will all benefit from this investment in local food production, which MassDevelopment is proud to support through the Transformative Development Initiative."

"The Redevelopment Authority is excited to incubate the City's next generation of urban farming on their Race Street lot," **said Holyoke Director of Planning & Economic Development Marcos Marrero.** "This is the type of activity that helps reactivate not just this parcel, but promotes innovation in the entire district, opens new possibilities for economic activity and increases the vitality of the City."

“HCC is grateful to MassDevelopment and the Commonwealth for investing in Holyoke, and supporting HCC,” **said HCC President Christina Royal**. “You cannot educate a hungry student. These container farms provide a means of addressing the problem of food insecurity in Holyoke, while at the same time offering experiential learning opportunities for resident interns as well as students in our nutrition, sustainability, culinary arts and health programs. HCC is committed to removing the barriers that our students and the community face. Partnerships such as these are key to transforming Holyoke and enabling our community to thrive.”

“Nuestras Raíces is really excited to be part of this collaborative effort to grow knowledge and economic opportunities for the students and residents of Holyoke,” **said Nuestras Raíces Executive Director Hilda Roque**. “I feel blessed to be part of a great legacy that will be shared with our next generation through a project that promotes sustainable agriculture and at the same time creates new streams of economic opportunities.”

“We built our container farms precisely for the purpose of creating positive change through fresh and local food,” **says Freight Farms co-founder and CEO Brad McNamara**. “MassDevelopment and their partners are doing important work in developing the Holyoke community, expanding the local workforce, and promoting sustainability. We’re proud to be involved in the Transformative Development Initiative.”

In August 2016, Governor Baker signed [An Act Relative to Job Creation and Workforce Development \(H.4569\)](#), which included a \$500 million re-authorization of the MassWorks Infrastructure Program to fund investment in critical infrastructure, a significant commitment by the Commonwealth.

In March, [Governor Baker filed economic development legislation](#) that includes an additional \$300 million re-authorization over the next five years for MassWorks.

About MassDevelopment:

MassDevelopment, the state’s finance and development agency, works with businesses, nonprofits, financial institutions, and communities to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. During FY2017, MassDevelopment financed or managed 377 projects generating investment of more than \$4.3 billion in the Massachusetts economy. These projects are projected to create about 9,488 jobs and build or rehabilitate 1,863 residential units.

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